Misreading the Body

Misreading the Body: E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Klein Zaches, genannt Zinnober*

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DISABILITY STUDIES BELONGS to the "otherness" discourses that seek to make visible the "constructedness" of social attitudes to corporeal and mental difference, and to revise cultural history in a way that draws attention to the presence and the oppression of the disabled person in literary and cultural representations.[1] The cultural turn within the critical field of Disability Studies in the United States and the United Kingdom has recently started to influence the analysis of the representation of physically and mentally disabled people in literary texts in German.[2] This is a critical approach to literary analysis that intersects with other social identity and body discourses in sociology and cultural anthropology, e.g. the management of stigma, the criminal body, eugenics, and the manipulated and disciplined body in Foucault's work. One of the aims of Disability Studies is to analyze historically the representation of the impaired mind and body in relation to the cultural traditions of myths, folklore, and superstition, and secondly to deconstruct the disempowering medical and diagnostic discussion of the disabled body. Its purpose is partly to focus on the discourses and social practices that produce the idea of disability and make the stigmatizing, exclusionistic, and inhumane treatment of the physically and mentally disabled possible. In effect, Disability Studies builds on Foucault's idea that the body is constantly regulated socially and judged by powerful classification and viewing strategies that come from disciplines that produce knowledge, such as medicine and psychology. By examining social and cultural discourses, disability theorists generally highlight the ways in which cultural locations such as literature not only misrepresent the impaired body, but also conceal and even erase it from the cultural domain.

In their account of the history of discourses and narratives of disability, David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, pioneers in the field,

write that "the negative imagery school set out to establish a continuum between limiting literary depictions and dehumanizing social attitudes toward disabled people."[3] This school of thought acknowledges that literary texts affect the perception of physical and mental difference by referring to the negative traditional meanings that are associated with impairments, and by demonstrating stigmatizing processes. For example, narrative plots that thematize disability tend to link negative social themes, such as transgression and affliction, to a physical condition, and often see the impaired body as inscribed with character traits that threaten to disrupt or endanger the equilibrium of society. Historically, the dominant cultural voices in western literature have related social or moral degeneracy metaphorically to the imperfect body.[4] Mitchell and Snyder have also identified archetypal schematic patterns that operate when a character with a physical impairment is represented in a literary text; for example, such narratives often focus on the difficulties of living with the disability, or the act of overcoming the physical flaw; or on the idea that social and cultural attitudes underscore the unnaturalness of the impaired body, and promote ideas of dependency, lack of productivity, and ugliness. Thematically, disability narratives criminalize the body and address issues of transgression, punishment, confinement, suffering, vice, stigmatization, persecution, rehabilitation, and extermination. The examination of popular (mis)conceptions about the impaired body in literature, art, and film is part of a trend in Disability Studies that challenges historical stereotypes and entrenched ideas about corporeal difference that are socially constructed.[5] Broadly speaking, this critical approach addresses the representational rift between the experience of physical and mental impairment on the one hand, and, on the other hand, stories written from the position of normalcy about those who are placed at the margins and labeled as outsiders. It traces the origins and cultural history of attitudes toward disability and assesses the role that literature has played in perpetuating the negative images of disability that circulate within societies.

Romantic and Rational Viewing Strategies

The German Romantic writer E. T. A. Hoffmann's tale *Klein Zaches, genannt Zinnober*[6] is a disability text that examines the notions that in a modern society a defective physical condition is equated with negative character traits, and that the impaired body threatens to disrupt the social equilibrium. It illustrates that the act of reading the body's exterior in order to evaluate identity is inevitably a flawed enterprise that is ham-

pered by the multilayered meanings that are written onto the surface of bodies by others, and by viewing processes that can be contaminated. Essentially, Hoffmann is critical of the gaze because it is not consistent or objective, but is always individual and subjective. In *Klein Zaches*, he takes as his examples the deformed and clothed body, and illustrates that a breach between the sign and the signifier causes the meaning of the body to change. Multiple perspectives reconfigure the sign's meaning. In *Der falsche Körper*, Markus Dederich explains that a change of perspective directly influences the meaning of the body: "Mit der Veränderung des Blicks verändert sich auch das, was der Blick erfasst [. . .]. Im Körper zeigt sich nicht *die* Wahrheit, sondern *eine* Wahrheit."[7] The process of getting to the truth behind the body and its identity is ultimately problematic because it always involves fallible body-based methods, i.e. the use of the senses, reason, or the emotions; in addition to this, dominant cultural myths have an affect on the interpretation. When the method of viewing changes or the dominant cultural myth is altered — the meaning of the sign, here the body, changes.

Both the Romantic and the rational, empirical viewing strategies of the Enlightenment operate alongside each other in Hoffmann's texts. The rational method of classifying the human body is part of an anthropological discussion of defining the threshold between humans and non-humans. Rational interpretations use a Cartesian disembodied viewing technique that attempts to play down the significance of the observer.[8] One of its aims is to separate fact from fiction, or truth from falsity. The discipline of physiognomics is an example of an Enlightenment model of rational viewing; it is actually a way of reading the body that involves an element of interpretation, while still claiming to preserve an objective, dispassionate distance between the observer and the subject. Disability theorists Mitchell and Snyder explain that physiognomical methods of assessing human identity on the basis of the physical characteristics of the body's surface are a way of "reasoning from the exterior to the interior" that happens "without the permission or the participation of the interpreted."[9]

The scientific treatment of deformity, known as teratology, also has the power to construct disability in that it tries to define and classify the deviant human body and find the causes and cures of medical conditions. It claims to be an attempt at humanizing the deformed body, bringing it into the natural order of things, and at recognizing the full range of human forms. However, teratology makes use of Foucauldian grouping processes that label bodies as deviant, such as comparison, differentiation, using hierarchical systems, homogenizing, and excluding. This

approach can be criticized ethically because it sets up boundaries around the term humanity, and in effect uses the method of exclusion to draw the body into medical and diagnostic discourses and disempower it. A. W. Bates, in his book *Emblematic Monsters,* analyzes reports of birth defects between 1500 and 1700 and concludes that these were always special and exceptional cases, and argues that "the rationalisation of monsters" happened later during the Enlightenment when the science of teratology developed.[10] This rationalization involves the medical assessment of what is known as the abnormal "monstrous" body; its aim is to attempt to free the impaired body from the fictional spaces of fable, folklore, and myth by using taxonomical methods.[11]

The epistemic move from folklore to science that happens with the formation of the knowledge discourses of the medical humanities during the Enlightenment is the theme of *Klein Zaches, genannt Zinnober*. It illustrates how Rationalist and Romantic viewing strategies conflict with each other. The Romantic form of viewing imagines, invents, and fictionalizes what it sees; it is an approach to viewing the impaired body that overtly links its judgments to superstition and folklore and is highly conscious of the process of demonizing and denaturalizing the nonconformist human body.[12] This way of reading the body, or fictionalizing it, can also be seen, for example, in pre-Enlightenment quasi-scientific accounts of deformed bodies that do not make a clear distinction between factual and fictional material.[13] While such eyewitness testimonies can seem authentic, they are often embellished fictional accounts that are conveyed using the marveling and sensationalizing spectator strategies that are still in use today when viewing bodily difference. In general, the Romantic reaction draws on an antiscientific or folkloric approach to perception. With the advent of the Enlightenment, natural scientific discourse tried to detach itself from such popularized views of the body. Although this "scientific turn" changed the viewing method, and can be seen as uncoupling the bodily sign from its traditional, folkloric signifiers, it can be argued that it never fully replaced the pre-Enlightenment viewing position — and that two systems were in use after this paradigm change. Thus, fiction, fabrication, and falsification have always played a role in the discourse of deformity and monstrosity.

The Romantics' negative reaction to the Enlightenment's rationalization of the abnormal body is the subject of Hoffmann's narrative *Klein Zaches*, and Hoffmann draws attention to the presence of multiple perspectives. Jonathan Crary argues that this paradigm switch was achieved in the Romantic period through a reconfiguration of the senses and vision, and caused an epistemic change that marked a rejection of the

rational, distancing, objectifying, and disembodied viewing techniques of Descartes.[14] Hoffmann's references to the fallibility of the eye in making judgments and his rejection of a single approach to viewing are part of the German Romantics' negative response to the increasing reliance on empirical inquiry based on sensory observation. His treatment of the body as a distinct site of optical and experiential uncertainty challenges the eye as a truth detector. Abnormal and non-human bodies, such as the automaton, the revenant, and the doppelgänger, that feature in Hoffmann's narratives, serve to create the uncanny effect of optical ambivalence and show how multiple, divided, and unnatural bodies confuse the viewer and pervasively threaten social stability. The gaze of the viewer is questioned constantly in Hoffmann's writing because the "imagined" conflicts with the "real" perception of a person — there is a recognized breach between them. An example of this is Nathanael in *Der Sandmann,* who projects his own fantasies onto the automaton Olimpia and brings her to life. Hoffmann's fictional worlds are always familiar and strange at the same time, and are conceived in terms of the conflicting discursive paradigms of science and poetry, or indeed fact and fiction.

The Disruption between Signs and Meanings

Klein Zaches, genannt Zinnober (first published in 1819) can be described as a "deformed, transformed" disability narrative that explores ambivalent attitudes toward the deformed body. [15] As a metanarrative, the "deformed, transformed" tale recounts the metamorphosis of a defective body that is transformed by an event that disguises or changes the original deformity. The consequence of overcoming the imperfection is a change in social attitudes toward the character Zaches and the removal of the elements of rejection, marginalization, and stigma that occur as a reaction to the non-conforming body.[16] However, this transformation is reversed; consequently, the return of the physical and cerebral shortcomings leads to social sanctions. This type of narrative thematizes the disjunction between the body and its meaning. When an imperfect body is disguised, or even when an old body is rejuvenated, as for example in Goethe's *Faust*, it becomes in principle a false signifier and assumes the identity and characteristics of the new body. This is the case for the character Zaches, who becomes Zinnober. In his original state Zaches is a diminutive hunchback who has a weak mind and problems speaking. His deformed body is initially enciphered as deviant. However, after the fairy Rosebelverde magically transforms him, he is seen by some to have a perfect body and mind, and is automatically given

credit for and lauded for the achievements of others. However, this metamorphosis is actually a partial illusion that leaves his original deformed state visible to characters with a Romantic disposition. Zaches's transformation into Zinnober does not affect his body or mind, but the way in which they are both perceived. While he mentally and physically remains the same, his appearance and behavior is merely masked by a magic spell. As a result, Zaches is anamorphic and the perception of his original body divides the characters in the narrative into two viewing positions: the Romantics, who can see the original, and the Rationalists, who cannot. The central question here is whether the Romantic gaze, which has its roots in folklore, tradition, and superstition, is more humane than the rational gaze, which has been duped because of the spell? The answer is no, because Zaches is not treated humanely by the Romantic hero Balthasar and his student friend Fabian, who go to great lengths to reverse the spell and restore the truth, which inevitably leads to Zaches's death.

The disruption between signs and their meanings is one of the concerns of Foucault; he assigns the role of reconnecting the disrupted relationships between signs and their meanings to the poet. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault writes of the poet: "Beneath the established signs, and in spite of them, he hears another, deeper, discourse, which recalls the time when words glittered in the universal resemblance of things."[17] This statement can be applied to the Romantic characters and poets in Hoffmann's writing who have an imaginative awareness of the mythical and the supernatural. They are conscious of a deeper discourse of *Poesie* and the symbolic meaning of nature. On the one hand, their existence is a struggle against the forces that restrict them to earthly, material, one-dimensional, or literal existences; on the other hand, the price to pay for occupying solely mythical and supernatural spaces is a disconnection from the material world in the form of eccentricity, madness, pathological behavior, disappearance, or death, such as Nathanael's suicide in *Der Sandmann* or Anselmus's relocation to the mythical Atlantis in *Der goldene Topf*. The consciousness of the break between material and spiritual reality and the disruption of signs and their meanings is what causes the Romantic maladies of Weltschmerz, melancholy, and "Zerrissenheit." Fundamentally, the German Romantic condition is an awareness of the hegemonic move toward modernity, of the loss of the prelapsarian state, and of the trauma of the breakdown of the superstitious and mystical belief systems inherited from the medieval period. Romantic characters, then, are constructed as the subversive and residual elements of a receding medieval cultural age that exist within the

space of a dominant rationalist and increasingly scientific and prosaic society.

The act of transformation does not just affect Zaches but the whole of society, when it moves toward modernity and rationalism. This transition leaves behind it a fault line between historic periods that Foucault, in his *Archaeology of Knowledge*, referred to as an epistemic change and that alters the way in which signs are interpreted. Foucault argues that after the move from the medieval, after 1600, to the modern period (which he refers to as "classical") of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, there was a radical increase in the importance of the natural sciences and the implementation of controlling and classifying structures. He comments that the classical episteme that introduces the modern period is based on "a systematics of signs, a sort of general and systematic taxonomy of things."[18] If we read Hoffmann in the light of Foucault we find that Hoffmann reveals the seismic split between signs and meanings that occurred around 1800 when the modern scientific era emerged as dominant. The remainder of the old medieval ways is evident in his German Romantic literary characters, who are marked out as "outsiders." They are connected to older cultural narratives and myths, have an intuitive connection with the folkloric medieval culture, and are generally the voice of a counterdiscourse to the restrictive rationalism of the modern period. They also have a naïve and innate sense of the harmonious interaction between the natural and the supernatural spheres, and they strive to experience both the material and the spiritual worlds contemporaneously. With the advent of the Enlightenment, Foucault sees "the disappearance of the old superstitious or magical beliefs and the entry of nature, at long last, into scientific order."[19] However, the sudden domination of rational thought disturbed the harmonious connection between natural signs and their supernatural meanings, and in effect disenchanted the world. This is the moment when miracles become a thing of the past and the natural environment becomes inanimate for the majority. In essence, the advancement of the natural sciences pushes the belief in the supernatural into the category of irrational behavior — outside the boundaries of normalcy.

There is a process at work within the core of the narrative *Klein Zaches* that shows, with reference to the body, what happens when more than one signifying system is in operation, and when dominant empirical and scientific methods of observing clash with supernatural and mythical traditions. At the beginning of the narrative, Hoffmann documents how the break from the older model happened and how the systemic change from superstition to rationalism occurred: the premodern kingdom of

King Demetrius, who ruled compassionately, is in the past and is described as having been a mystical and enchanted place where mythical figures lived peacefully alongside humankind. After Demetrius's death, his despotic heir Paphnutius inherits the throne, and an age of reason is forced on society, while the notion of miracles and magic is outlawed. Paphnutius declares the past to be a backward age of naïve ignorance that was in need of reform. Consequently, a new modern philistine society emerges practically overnight, one which, while not without comic effect, is hostile to poetry and mythology and believes that scientific methods of interpreting the natural world are superior to folkloristic ones. Any notion of the irrational is eradicated via a royal decree that prohibits the use of witchcraft, magic, and supernatural practices; and the rationalist state starts to police, censor, and expel those who do not renounce the supernatural. This forces the magical figures to go underground and disguise themselves by assuming bourgeois identities. Having driven magic and superstition from the center to the periphery, the state then contradicts itself by publicly denying their very existence. This satire of a modern burocratic society makes a statement on post-Napoleonic Germany after the foundation of the Deutscher Bund in 1815, and after the introduction of the constitutions of Bavaria and Baden in 1818. State corruption, censorship, house searches, confiscations of illegal goods, and the persecution and expulsion of nonconformists were on the increase as bureaucratic systems developed.

Misreading the Defective Body

At the beginning of the narrative, before the move from folklore to science, Zaches's physical form is a corporeal sign that provokes attempts to define him as nonhuman and supernatural. Difference is often constructed with reference to superhuman characteristics, e.g. blindness and the gift of prophesy. In the first scene with Zaches, Hoffmann makes use of what Disability Studies calls the medieval model of attributing the occurrence of congenital deformity to divine punishment for misdemeanors or "Strafe des Himmels" (10). The notion of a fated abnormality is signaled in the epithets "unselig" (unfortunate, 7) and "vermaledeit" (damned, 42). The word "Mißgeburt" (monstrosity) is also used frequently in the text, and according to Hagner, relates the deformity to the idea of a social threat.[20] The narrative begins with the circumstances of Zaches's birth and its effect on his mother and father. His mother Liese is a poverty-stricken farmer's wife who is suffering from hunger and thirst, and is prostrate on the ground and close to death. Her

first words question the injustice of their predicament and lament that she and her husband are the only villagers condemned to abject poverty, hard labor, and bad luck. She views her husband's discovery of gold in the garden, its loss to thieves, the destruction of their house and barn, the failure of the crops, and the birth defects of their child as divinely-directed retribution. The prolonging of the burden of poverty and suffering is blamed on Zaches and his unusual bodily needs that drain the scarce and essential resources for survival. The opening scene is telling in that it anchors the narrative in the pre-Enlightenment belief system, when explanations for misfortunes were sought in the supernatural. The references to Zaches as a "Wechselbalg" (changeling), "Däumling" (Tom Thumb), "Unding" (absurdity), "Unhold" (fiend), "Koboldchen" (little goblin), "Wurzelmännlein" (little root man), and "Hexenkerl" (brownie) exemplify the use of popular superstition to describe human disability (7, 8, 72, 81, 89). In folklore tradition, the term changeling refers to a human child that has been replaced with a nonhuman child by or with the devil, demons, or fairies. According to the Grimms' German dictionary, it was also used interchangeably in pre-nineteenth-century literary sources with reference to a child with physical or intellectual disabilities.[21] If we were to use the scientific discourse of today that tracks the historical development of disabilities from superstition to science by applying the method of retrospective diagnosis to recorded medical conditions and disabilities, we would find that the physical impairments associated with changelings were cretinism, birth defects, and goiters. Furthermore, psychologists have noted that the connection between the substitute child and the disabled child arises from the psychological reaction of grief, shock, and rejection that can occur when parents are confronted with non-normalcy.[22] The notion of the child's substitution, which incidentally is a form of doppelgängerism, is viewed in psychology as a masked or suppressed desire to reject the child.[23] In comparison with its history in folklore, the changeling corresponds quite closely to Hoffmann's depiction of Zaches, and follows Susan Schoon Eberly's description of the changeling as "a prodigious eater, constantly hungry and continuously demanding food," as being "undersized and sickly," with "unusual features — misshapen limbs, an oversized head," and as having difficulty walking and talking.[24] Eberly also links the congenital disorder Cri du chat syndrome, which gets its name from the distinctive cat-like cry that young children who have the condition make, to the epithet "changeling." This is a new diagnosis of Zaches's condition: "Zu St. Laurenz Tag ist nun der Junge drittehalb Jahre gewesen, und kann

auf seinen Spinnenbeinchen nicht stehen, nicht gehen, und knurrt und miaut, statt zu reden, wie eine Katze" (7).

Although Zaches is referred to as a changeling, it is important to point out here that he is in fact a "reversed changeling" who goes through the process of becoming "normal" and becoming human or, more accurately, wearing the mask of normality. Part of the process of becoming human is his entrance into public life and the attainment of public status and recognition. In becoming human, Zaches has to cross a species threshold and undergo a transformation that starts from the position of bestiality. Before the transformation, the references to Zaches stress his nonhuman, monstrous qualities: "Untierchen" (little beast), "Spinnenbeinchen" (little spider's legs), "Ungestalt" (monster), "Bestie" (beast), "Maikäfer" (may-bug), "Erdwurm" (earth worm), "Affe" (monkey), "Pavian" (baboon), and "Simia Beelzebub" (9, 7, 11, 11, 9, 43, 72, 89, 72). In fact, his abnormal body is chiefly presented as posing a problem for biological taxonomy, thus indicating a breakdown of the boundaries between humans and nonhumans, since he is classified by the narrator and other characters as being both animal and vegetable in phrases such as "ein gespalteter Rettich" (a split radish) and "ein klein Alräunchen" (a small mandrake, 8). This highlights the difficulty in identifying universally applicable corporeal norms, and at the same time illustrates that the exterior of the human body is not a stable indicator of identity.

After the spell disguises Zaches, the restoration of the link between the body and its original folkloric meaning falls to the Romantic poet, Balthasar, who has never severed the links with the medieval paradigm. This is done in consultation with a representative of the supernatural realm, the reclusive doctor/wizard Prosper Alpanus, who scans the pages of several animated wonder books of root men and earth spirits only to dismiss them because they do not have the same physical and behavioral characteristics as Zaches (54). Hoffmann is parodying here pre-Enlightenment anthropology and comparative anatomy, whose encyclopedias and quasi-fantastical compendia classify types of living and inanimate things and illustrate the variation of human forms. Such illustrated anthropological books show that people with deformities and magical figures are placed together in the same category: "Als Prosper Alpanus das Buch aufschlug, erblickten die Freunde eine Menge sauber illuminierter Kupfertafeln, die die allerverwunderlichsten mißgestaltesten Männlein mit den tollsten Fratzengesichtern darstellten, die man nur sehen konnte" (55).[25] After considering the figures in these books, Alpanus concludes that Zaches is a human being who is under the

influence of a magic spell. Although Alpanus is associated with the non-rational and the mythical, he provides the correct explanation of Zaches's identity and explains that the viewing method is the problem. The rationalist characters misread Zaches's body because their vision is distorted by the spell — and their rejection of the supernatural seems to make this deception possible. The spell removes the negative perception of the malformed body and replaces it with a positive one. When the Romantic characters eventually break the magic charm, the sign and its meaning are restored. Consequently Zaches becomes an animal again in the eyes of society, is taken for an imposter, and a frenzied lynch mob arrives to deal with him: "Hinunter mit der kleinen Bestie — hinunter — klopft dem klein Zaches die Ministerjacke aus — sperrt ihn in den Käficht — laßt ihn für Geld sehen auf dem Jahrmarkt! Beklebt ihn mit Goldschaum und beschert ihn den Kindern zum Spielzeug!" (90)[26] Thus the masking of the impaired body, a stigma management strategy that Erving Goffman discusses in *Stigma*, actually allows for its survival in bourgeois society, and protects it from instant mistreatment.[27]

Misreading the Text(ile)

The clothed body, like the natural body, can also be misread and viewed from a prejudiced standpoint if the observer is too far removed from the context of the subject he or she is studying and misinterprets the visual signs. Clothing transmits meaning via a nonverbal sign system and has the power to transform the surface identity of the individual. It uses a semiotic code that prompts the viewer to assign an identity; it also communicates the relationship between individuals and establishes whether norms are being challenged or not. Since Roland Barthes, we know that clothing is a controlling device that exposes a system of social norms: for example, uniforms mark the position of the wearer in a social or military context or hierarchy. In her book *The Clothed Body*, Patrizia Calefato states quite succinctly: "a textile is a text," i.e. it functions like a language and gives objects a meaning.[28] Clothing has a representative function (Elizabeth Wilson) and a semiotic one (Barthes), and is a marker of identity, social standing, gender, sexuality, and cultural grouping. As a sign system, dress has distinct rules that fix sartorial borders, according to which the wearer conforms and defines himself in relation to others. We see this sign system in practice in *Klein Zaches* when the Enlightenment scholar Ptolomäus Philadelphus encounters university students for the first time, and misinterprets their clothing as citing the Orient. In this example, the oriental clothing operates in a

tribal way, in that it indicates social grouping. In nineteenth-century Germany, such grouping strategies were most evident among students, who wore bright colors to signify their membership in a student fraternity or regional corps (*Burschenschaft* or *Landsmannschaft*). While such societies and codes of dress facilitated interaction between students who had similar backgrounds, it also functioned as mechanism that socially segregated, leading to reduced contact between students with different regional identities and to an increased sense of regional solidarity. When the reclusive scholar Philadelphus mistakes the students at the gates to the university town of Kerepes for strangely dressed people from a faraway country, he perceives them as wondrous people in strange clothing (20). His lack of understanding of this signifying system leads to his literal perception of them as "exotic beings." Not only are the students transformed into oriental "Others," but Philadelphus's viewing practice takes on the characteristics of the Orientalist perspective as theorized by Edward Said — the superior, imperialist position of the West — when he calls the students a barbaric foreign race (22) and sets them up as curious exotic objects of study for his book (59). Paradoxically, the purpose of this is to establish the true identity and customs of this unknown tribe. Philadelphus's interpretation of the Orient has the typical lack of regard for the cultural diversity among the oriental nations that Said highlighted. This cultural disparity becomes apparent in his description of their Japanese trousers and their disheveled, long hair in the style of the Turks and the Greeks. Their "otherness" is further demonstrated by the inappropriate exposure of the skin on their necks. The students are read as a strange, foreign, and wild element in society that needs to be watched and contained. While this refers to the contemporary climate of suspicion toward the role of the students in the democratic movement in the year of the Karlsbad Decrees of 1819, it also discredits the oriental male as a figure of subversion and opposition.

A further instance of the misinterpretation of the textile occurs after Prosper Alpanus bewitches Fabian's coat so that the sleeves become too short and the coattails too long. Fabian is unable to go out in public without being ridiculed because his bare arms break the norms of dress of the time and place, and his coattails look comical. Like the nonconformist *sans culottes* of the French Revolution, his appearance is invested with political meaning and deemed radical. The various social reactions to this unconventional coat reveal the presence of different discourses of dress. To women, his coat suggests vanity; the theologians view him as a highly dangerous member of a sect, either the "Ärmelianer" (the sleeve sect) or the "Schößianer" (the coattail sect), both of

which support the idea of complete freedom of the will (79). The diplomats see him as an agitator instigating dissatisfaction among the people, and the university's rector threatens him with expulsion if he does not wear a proper coat in public. While all see him as a threat and turn to exclusion strategies, they do not agree on the meaning of the sign. This reveals that modern society has a tendency to divide individuals into the categories of normal and deviant and to place the latter in opposition to ordered society. It also shows that the gaze of others determines the identity of the individual. Here, each societal group uses a different deciphering method to judge the surface.

Masking the Clothed Body: Disability, Carnival, and the Grotesque

The discussion of disguising the "otherness" of the impaired body that is currently emerging in Disability Studies connects directly with the discourses on the grotesque and the carnival, a subject that Hoffmann treated more extensively in *Prinzessin Brambilla* (1820), a year after publishing *Klein Zaches.* The idea of the mask is now present in discussions on disability, for example, the disability theorist Tobin Siebers refers to the act of "masquerading" as the strategy of passing for able-bodied. This approach to hiding impairment is a way of managing what Erving Goffman sees as the stigma of a spoiled identity. Siebers maintains that performance strategies are at work here that conceal a stigmatized characteristic, or disguise it with another disability, or even over-display the disability by exaggerating it. Those who practice this are seen as "skillful interpreters of human society" who "recognize that in most societies there exists no common experience or understanding of disability on which to base their identity."[29] The skillful interpreter of human society in Hoffmann's text is the fairy Rosabelverde, who magically transforms Zaches into the socially acceptable Zinnober. Zaches, however, remains one-dimensional because he does not develop inwardly in a positive way. Rosabelverde refers to this after his death:

> "Armer Zaches! — Stiefkind der Natur! — ich hatt es gut mit dir gemeint! — Wohl mocht es Torheit sein, daß ich glaubte, die äußere schöne Gabe, womit ich dich beschenkt, würde hineinstrahlen in dein Inneres, und eine Stimme erwecken, die dir sagen müßte: ‚Du bist nicht der, für den man dich hält, aber strebe doch nur an, es dem gleichzutun, auf dessen Fittigen du Lahmer, Unbefiederter dich aufschwingst!' — Doch keine innere Stimme erwachte. Dein träger toter Geist vermochte sich nicht emporzurichten, du ließest nicht nach

> in deiner Dummheit, Grobheit, Ungebärdigkeit — Ach! — wärst du nur ein geringes Etwas weniger, ein kleiner ungeschlachter Rüpel geblieben, du entgingst dem schmachvollen Tode!" (92–93)[30]

The masking of Zaches's body has some of the hallmarks of Bakhtin's theory of the "carnivalesque": (1) the spectacle of the grotesque body; (2) the inversion of master and slave, and with it the challenge to the established social order; (3) the theatrical parody of the symbols of office and the caricature of the rites and ceremonial practices of the state and government.[31] The action of masking or disguising the body causes it to be misread, and is a key device in texts that reference the carnival. A carnivalesque body is a clothed body that conceals the identity of the wearer of the costume, and quotes the behavior, gestures, and appearance of another. As such, according to Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World* (1984), it challenges the social order theatrically and surreptitiously, for the inside and the outside of the body are disconnected, and identities shift.

With the temporary removal of social censorship and rules in the exceptional situation of the carnival comes the release of the grotesque body into the social arena and the public exposure to the realities of bodily functions such as eating, drinking, defecation, and sexual life. That which is normally hidden from the public sphere becomes visible during the festivities of the carnival, and is seen by all in the guise of grotesque and vulgar comedy. The spectacle of the grotesque not only publicly cites bodily actions that are normally private, but also showcases bodies that deviate from the norm, since, as Bakhtin writes, feast days, festivals, and fairs were the occasion for carnival traditions "with the participation of giants, dwarfs, monsters and trained animals."[32] In her chapter "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory," Mary Russo states:

> The grotesque body is the open, protruding, extended, secreting body, the body of becoming, process, and change. The grotesque body is opposed to the classical body, which is monumental, static, closed, and sleek, corresponding to the aspirations of bourgeois individualism; the grotesque body is connected to the rest of the world.[33]

In *Enforcing Normalcy*, Lennard Davis explains that the visual images of the disabled or deformed body have always been linked to the concept of the "grotesque" and that these have periodically turned the established order upside down.[34] Davis defines the "grotesque" in the context of disability as "a disturbance in the normal visual field, not as a set of characteristics through which a fully constituted subject views the world."[35] He finds that disability is similar to the "grotesque" in that it is

and has been used "as a metaphor for otherness, solitude, tragedy, bitterness, alterity."[36] As such, Davis sees both "disabled" and "grotesque" figures as being disempowered by the viewer who occupies the space of cultural normalcy.

How closely are disability, carnival, and the grotesque linked in *Klein Zaches*? Zaches initially loses his status as a carnival spectacle when he becomes hidden from public view and participates in noncarnivalesque bourgeois life. However, since his grotesque body is still seen, the Romantic characters enforce censorship. The grotesque comedy of carnival comes into play after the masking spell has been broken, and Zaches suffers a carnivalesque death by drowning in the urine in his own chamber pot. For Bakhtin, carnival is a subversive travesty and a form of sanctioned resistance that temporarily inverts the social order. The carnivalesque masking of the the lower-ranked body is a short-term transfer of power from the higher to the lower ranks of society. This is achieved by staging the breakdown or disconnection between the inside (identity, self, subject) and the outside or the physical body. This transformation is similar in the character Zaches, whose mask allows him to acquire social influence and to hold public office. While carnival is an approved performance of resistance, it is also a controlling device that helps to keep social tensions in check, and secures the very feudal or oppressive systems of rule and power that it ridicules and mimics.

Zaches can be viewed as a subversive character because he is able to infiltrate society without being discovered by those in positions of power. His fraudulent participation in official ceremonies and rituals, his acceptance of the Order of the Green Tiger, and the long-drawn-out tailoring and fitting of his uniform expose the practices of the enlightened state as institutional performances. Hoffmann places Zaches at the center of the rites and rituals of the dominant power but a lack of transparency enables him to evade the panoptic eye. The Romantic or supernatural intervention that causes the reversal of the spell should then be seen as a force of resistance to the governing rationalist ideology that blindly supports the cantankerous, self-indulgent social climber who has no Romantic spirit.

Conclusion

Klein Zaches, genannt Zinnober, with its focus on the treatment of the impaired and disguised bodies, explores Hoffmann's awareness of a disconnection between the sign and its meaning and the detachment of the body from its identity. This is an issue that has been taken up by

disability theorists such as Mitchell and Snyder, who view the body's surface as "a constructed phenomenon" onto which a "fantasy of deformity" is projected by the ruling ideology. On exposing the deformed body as "the phantasmatic façade that disguises the workings of patriarchal, racist, heterosexist, and upper class norms," Mitchell and Snyder maintain that the disfigured body is instantly forgotten.[37] In many ways, the modern body has come to be defined as a site of complex and dynamic social and cultural processes. Hoffmann treats the impaired body as a corporeal referent, that is, an amorphous, unstable image that exposes the problems of limited perspectives and paradigm changes. It acts like other bodies in that it is a split body, a surface on which a meaning is inscribed by others, and a visual symbol of nonconformity, disruption, and disorder. The question of how to distinguish truth from illusion during a period of cultural change, and at a time when different cultural frames and models are in operation, is a central part of Hoffmann's dilemma regarding perspective: sight, the principal sense that perceives the material world and the basis for empirical and scientific judgments, must allow for a nonrational insight. Its location within the body, which is the basis for all physical ways of viewing, makes it a flawed mechanism, however, one that causes the individual to experience the world from a disrupted perspective. The German Romantic crisis of vision, then, relates to an awareness of a personal distortion of reality that stems from both the destabilizing effects of introspection and self-isolation and from the physical or mental decline of the body. To some extent, the postmodern pluralist reaction to the body revisits the German Romantic one by stating that the body cannot read the body objectively; it can only re-read the body repeatedly in different ways. In fact, the meaning of the body that is ascribed to it by the viewer tells us more about the viewer than the person being viewed.[38]

Notes

[1] David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, "Representation and Its Discontents. The Uneasy Home of Disability in Literature and Film," *Handbook of Disability Studies*, ed. Gary L. Albrecht et al. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001), 195–218, here 196–202.

[2] This has also influenced German Studies in English-speaking countries. See Carol Poore's *Disability in Twentieth Century German Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan P, 2007) and Elizabeth Hamilton's article "From Social Welfare to Civil

Rights: The Representation of Disability in Twentieth-Century German Literature," in *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan P, 1997), 223–39.

[3] Mitchell and Snyder, "Representation and its Discontents," 197.

[4] David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997), 63.

[5] Mitchell and Snyder, "Representation and its Discontents," 196.

[6] E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Späte Werke*, vol. 1 (Munich: Winkler Verlag, 1965). Subsequent references to this work are cited in the text by page number.

[7] "A change in the gaze changes that which the gaze views [. . .]. *The* truth is not visible in the body, but only *one* truth." Markus Dederich, *Körper, Kultur und Behinderung: Eine Einführung in die Disability Studies* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2007), 81.

[8] See Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 1992).

[9] Mitchell and Snyder, *Narrative Prosthesis*, 59.

[10] A. W. Bates, *Emblematic Monsters: Unnatural Conceptions and Deformed Births in Early Modern Europe* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005), 7.

[11] Michael Hagner, *Der falsche Körper* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 1995), 9.

[12] Hagner, *Der falsche Körper*, 9.

[13] Bates, *Emblematic Monsters*, 7.

[14] See Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*.

[15] This descriptor comes from Lord Byron's play *The Dwarf: Deformed Transformed* (1822) which dramatizes the character Arnold's pact with a stranger, who changes his deformed body into that of the Greek hero Achilles, while the stranger then takes on the discarded human form and accompanies Arnold on a Faustian journey through life. Other examples of such narratives are: Mary Shelley, "Transformation" (1831); Wilhelm Hauff, "Der Zwerg Nase" (1826).

[16] Sharon L. Snyder, "Infinities of Forms: Disability Figures in Artistic Traditions," in *Disability Studies: Enabling the Humanities*, ed. Sharon L. Snyder et al. (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2002), 173–96, here 176.

[17] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2000), 49.

[18] Michel Foucault, *Michel Foucault: Essential Works of Foucault 1954–1984; Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion (London: Penguin, 2000), 264.

[19] Foucault, *The Order of Things*, 54.

[20] Hagner, *Der falsche Körper*, 19.

[21] See also C. F. Goodey and Tim Stainton, "Intellectual Disability and the Myth of the Changeling Myth," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 37.3 (2001): 223–40, here 223.

[22] Goodey and Stainton, "Intellectual Disability," 224.

[23] Susan Schoon Eberly, C. F. Goodey, Tim Stainton, and Carl Haffter, for example, follow this trend by tracing the historical discussion of the changeling from myth to diagnosis.

[24] Susan Schoon Eberly, "Fairies and the Folklore of Disability: Changelings, Hybrids and the Solitary Fairy," *Folklore* 99 (1988): 58–77, here 63.

[25] "When Prosper Alpanus opened the book, the friends saw a number of neatly illustrated copperplates that portrayed the strangest misshapen little men with the wildest grimaces one could imagine."

[26] "Down with the little beast — down — pull off little Zaches's minster's jacket — lock him up in the cage — have him on show for money at the fair! Paste him with Dutch foil and give him to the children to play with!"

[27] Erving Goffman, *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Pentice-Hall, 1963), 73–91.

[28] Patrizia Calefato, *The Clothed Body*, trans. Lisa Adams (Oxford: Berg, 2004), 87.

[29] Tobin Siebers, *Disability Theory: Corporealities: Discourses of Disability* (U of Michigan P, 2008), 117–18.

[30] "Poor Zaches! — Nature's stepchild! — I meant you no harm! — It was probably foolish of me to believe that the gift of external beauty that I gave you would penetrate your inner self and awaken a voice within you that would say to you: 'You are not the person people think you are, but just aspire to equal the one on whose wings you are soaring upwards, you lame and unfledged one!' — But no inner voice awoke. Your slothful, dead spirit was not capable of rising upwards; you did not cease to be stupid, coarse, unruly — Oh! — If only you had been a little bit less of a little, clumsy lout, you would have escaped this dishonorable death!"

[31] Efrat Tseëlon, "Reflections on Mask and Carnival," in *Masquerade and Identities: Essays on Gender, Sexuality and Marginality*, ed. Efrat Tseëlon, 18–37, here 27.

[32] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1984), 5.

[33] Mary Russo, "Female Grotesques: Carnival and Theory," in *Writing on the Body*, ed. K. Conboy, M. Medine, and S. Stanbury (New York: Columbia UP, 1997), 318–36, here 325.

[34] Lennard Davis, "Enforcing Normalcy," in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. Vincent B. Leitch (New York & London: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001), 2400–21, here 2418.

[35] Davis, "Enforcing Normalcy," 2418.

[36] Davis, "Enforcing Normalcy," 2418.

[37] David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder, "Introduction. Disability Studies and the Double Bind of Representation," in *The Body and Physical Difference: Discourses of Disability*, ed. David T. Mitchell and Sharon L. Snyder (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1997), 6.

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